



IDENTITY THEFT AND FRAUD PREVENTION

We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed on us in stealing a name, address, Social Security number, credit cards, etc. Below are some suggestions to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know:

1. The next time you order checks, have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them.
 - If someone takes your checkbook they will not know if you sign your checks with just your initials or your first name but your bank will know how you sign your checks.
2. When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, **DO NOT** put the complete account number on the "For" line. Instead, just put the last four numbers.
 - The credit card company knows the rest of the number and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won't have access to it.
3. Put your work phone # on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a PO Box use that instead of your home address. If you do not have a PO Box, use your work address.
4. Never have your Social Security number printed on your checks. You can add it if it is necessary. But if you have it printed, anyone can get it.
5. Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine; do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.
 - You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Also carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling either here or abroad.
6. We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. The key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them
7. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation.
8. It is very important to call the three national credit-reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

The numbers are:

- Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
- Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742
- Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
- Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271

This information brought to you by
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